

2015-J5987

LEGISLATIVE RESOLUTION commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Saratoga Performing Arts Center on July 8, 2016

WHEREAS, The arts, in whatever form depicted, are central to human expression; they are truly a universal language and their contribution to the development of friendship and understanding among all peoples cannot be overestimated; and

WHEREAS, The history, the heritage, and the lives of the people of all countries and all cultures are portrayed in their music and dance; the art and act of sharing them enriches us altogether; and

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and commend those illustrious organizations that have brought entertainment and cultural enrichment to the citizens of the great State of New York; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern, and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Saratoga Performing Arts Center in Saratoga Springs, New York, on Friday, July 8, 2016; and

WHEREAS, This auspicious milestone will be celebrated throughout the 2016 summer season with a myriad of events including the World Premiere by the Twyla Tharp Dance Company, a two-day engagement by the award winning Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre, a New York City Ballet World Premiere ballet by Justin Peck, and a Philadelphia Orchestra World Premiere of composer Michael Torke's "Unconquered"; and

WHEREAS, In early February 1961, Albany newspaperman Duane La Fleche noted a wire service report about a group hoping to entice New York Philharmonic to make Stowe, Vermont, its summer residence; and

WHEREAS, This report set off a chain reaction of historic proportions; local civic, cultural and legislative leaders, who had previously

considered a Saratoga Arts Center an interesting possibility, were galvanized into action; within a week, they held their first meeting, and within a month, they were focusing on Saratoga Spa State Park as the site; and

WHEREAS, The group funded start-up costs out of their own pockets; then came the more formidable challenge of demonstrating community-wide support to foundations and philanthropists; the community came through in record time; and

WHEREAS, By the summer of 1963, generous contributions from Rockefeller Brothers Fund and New York State supplemented community support to ensure that the dream would become reality; and

WHEREAS, The New York City Ballet's George Balanchine joined the development board, and together with Lincoln Kirstein helped define both the physical form and artistic agenda of the Saratoga Performing Arts Center; soon, the Philadelphia Orchestra came into the picture, with artistic director Eugene Ormandy offering his input; and

WHEREAS, In February of 1964, Richard Leach became the first Executive Director of the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, adding his programming experience at Lincoln Center to the mix; shortly thereafter, the Philadelphia Orchestra and New York City Ballet formalized their commitments, and construction could begin; and

WHEREAS, On July 8, 1966, New York City Ballet Conductor Robert Irving raised his baton, and George Balanchine's "A Midsummer Night's Dream" enchanted the opening night audience at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center; this inaugural performance was the start of the longest running summer residency for a ballet company in the Nation; and

WHEREAS, Less than a month later, Eugene Ormandy raised his baton to lead the Philadelphia Orchestra in Beethoven's "Consecration of the House Overture," a fitting tribute to the new Amphitheatre; and

WHEREAS, Framed by rolling lawns, majestic pines and rushing streams, SPAC's Amphitheatre, situated in a naturally curved hillside in the

center of the 2,200-acre Saratoga Spa State Park, has been an ideal showcase for internationally acclaimed music and dance artists for five decades; and

WHEREAS, The spectacular Amphitheatre offers covered seating for 5,200 and the surrounding lawn can accommodate an additional audience of 20,000; each season more than 350,000 people pass through SPAC's gates; and

WHEREAS, From its inception, SPAC's growth, success and stature has been intertwined with that of its founding resident companies, the New York City Ballet and the Philadelphia Orchestra, two of the world's foremost artistic organizations; and

WHEREAS, In 2014, the circle of partners grew to include the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the Nation's premier chamber music organization, which makes SPAC's Little Theatre its summer home each August; and

WHEREAS, Other annual highlights of the summer season include the iconic Frehofer's Saratoga Jazz Festival which was founded at SPAC in 1978, by jazz impresario George Wein; a star-studded concert series by Live Nation; professional opera productions by Opera Saratoga, and renowned modern dance programming; the final curtain of the SPAC season comes down in early September with the Annual Saratoga Wine and Food Festival; and

WHEREAS, Through the years, numerous talented and popular bands and musicians have graced the Amphitheatre's stage; in 1967, SPAC's first special performance was Harry Belafonte, and one year later, 18 world-renowned acts, such as Simon & Garfunkel, Diana Ross and the Supremes, the Bee Gees and the Doors electrified music fans; and

WHEREAS, In 1971, the Who performed for 33,000 rock lovers, a record broken twice by the Grateful Dead in the 1980s; in 1983, 537,754 people attended SPAC during its summer season, a record which still holds today; and

WHEREAS, Today, under the luminous leadership of President and Execu-

tive Officer, Marcia White, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center continues to present vibrant and diverse artistic performances which engage and enrich its community; and

WHEREAS, It is most fitting that we take time to celebrate the arts of our Nation, to honor our artists, and to express our appreciation to

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everyone who patronizes the arts; and as we celebrate the arts, we celebrate and give thanks to our American freedom, the only atmosphere in which artists can truly create and in which art is truly the expression of the soul; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to commend Saratoga Performing Arts Center, upon the occasion of commemorating its 50th Anniversary, fully confident that it will continue to enjoy the sparkling success which has so characterized its past; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Marcia White, President and Executive Director, Saratoga Performing Arts Center.